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TYNESIDE ANARCHIST

Newsheet of the Tyneside Anarchist Group

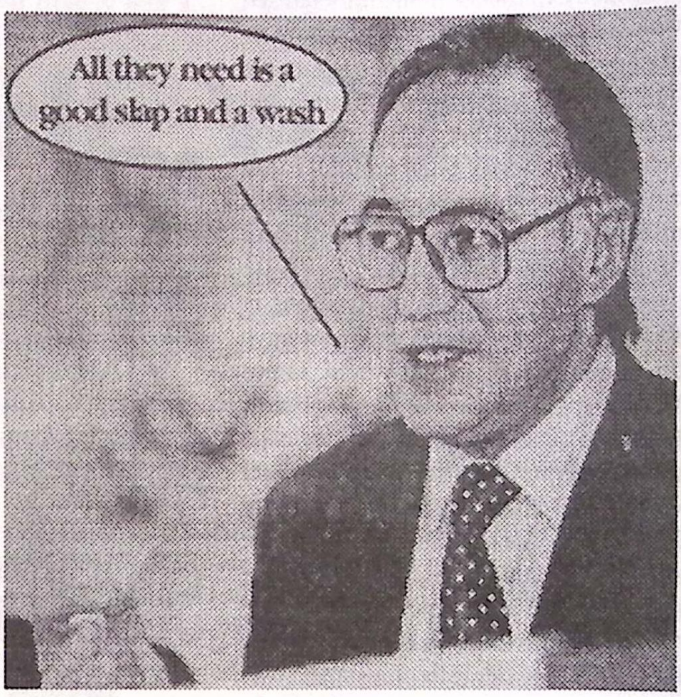
December 95 Issue 3

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSHEET ARE THOSE OF INDIVIDUALS AND NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF T.A.G.

THE BIG ISSUE

THE homeless appear to be one of a number of 'problems ' politicians have decided to wage war against. Not by tackling the root causes of the problem, but rather by aiming to remove them from sight. As John Major stated in 1994, the homeless are an eyesore which could drive away tourists and shoppers. With a straight face he even bleated "It is not acceptable to be out on the street. There is no justification for it these days". We quite agree, however we're expressing anger at our class being forced onto the street, rather than merely complaining about having to step over them on the way to the opera. One year on and the message from the men in suits is still the same. Jack Straw rallies the troops with a call to reclaim the streets from "addicts and wino's". The political parties may differ, but the message is the same: we don't care what the homeless suffer, as long as they suffer out of sight. If it needs to be stated more clearly, Labour and the Tories find it upsetting that the homeless have the audacity of existing. The fact that they are still breathing seems to provoke a hateful knee-jerk reaction from those in power (or those that hope to be).

Of course there's an answer to this! In America (where Britain gets a lot of inspiration), a recent case has sparked a fair amount of concern. Joseph Gould, who kept himself alive by selling a paper similar to The Big Issue and washing car windows chanced upon the wrong person. Apparently it's not only the British establishment who find the situation of the homeless a threat to anything and everything. Mr Gould approached a car and offered to clean the window, at which point an argument began with the driver. Gregory Becker, the driver, went to his car boot, produced a gun and shot Gould in the head at point blank range! To say the official response to this crime has been watered down is an understatement. Becker turned out to be an off-duty cop who, disgusted by the black homeless man in front of him, shot Gould dead. Murder? Manslaughter? NO, Becker stands trial accused of discharging his weapon without informing his superior officer, and, most sickeningly, leaving a citizen in distress i.e. DEAD!!!



Recent developments in Britain have seen police `cleaning-up' areas, showing that whatever the country or political party the response is the same: Ignore the problems that leave people homeless and concentrate on moving them back to the areas where the middle and upper classes never venture.

As Anarchists, in the short term we want the homeless housed, preferably in the many empty buildings which would more than accommodate the nations homeless (818,000 empty buildings according to DoE statistics 1992). In the long term however, our demand is nothing less than a social revolution and an end to this `dog-eat-dog' system that runs for profit, not human welfare, inevitably leaving the unlucky or unsuccessful with at best, uninhabitable housing or at worst, homelessness.

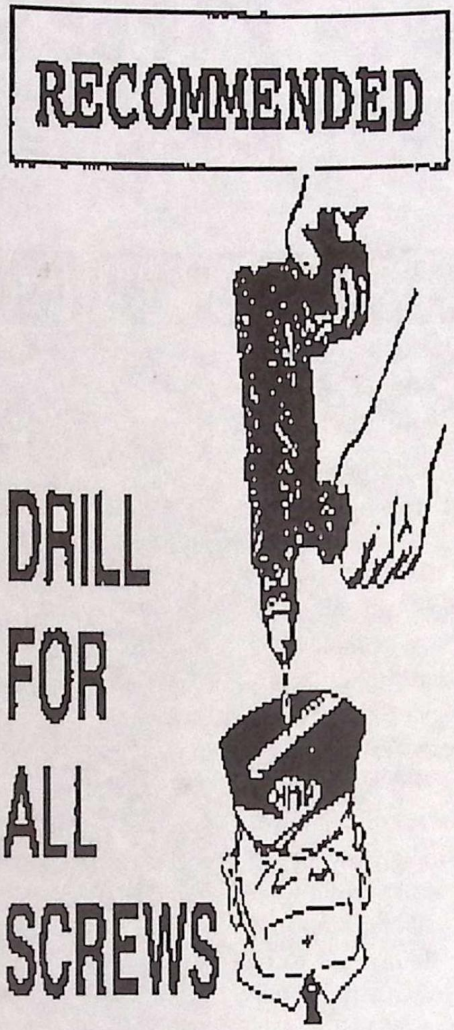
The Big Issue **is sold by homeless and ex-homeless people, who get 40p of the cover price. The North-East office is at 52-58 Blenheim Street, Newcastle, NE1 4BQ.**

SQUALL **is magazine for the squatter homeless and can reached at SQUALL c/o 2 St Paul's Road, London, N1 2QN.**

SHOWDOWN AT FULL SUTTON

AS we go to print we are getting reports of disturbances in Full Sutton Prison, near York. Unlike the popular myth fed to us by the media, of prisons resembling holiday camps and prisoners living it up in a 'champagne lifestyle', Full Sutton has a notorious reputation for it's brutal and oppressive regime; even among long term prisoners who, lets face it, will have had much experience of institutionalised violence already. As a relatively new prison, Full Sutton has been purpose built to bring new ways of isolating and controlling prisoners. Over the past 2 years there have been innumerable complaints, allegations of gross misconduct against prison officers ranging from destruction of private property to serious assaults resulting in serious injuries. Many prisoners have attempted suicide, one of whom, James Walker, succeeded. Control and Restraint (C&R) Squads (or riot cops to you and me) are used frequently and with frightening regularity, in many instances for the most minor of offences, such as the case of a prisoner in June last year, who was subject to assault by 'C&R' for passing two cigarette papers to another prisoner. His punishment was to spend the next two days in a strip cell, later being transferred to a segregation unit in Liverpool for 14 days. Other prisoners, such as Satpal Ram, have been singled out for special treatment and victimisation by openly racist screws. Satpal has been frequently subject to assaults, both verbal and physical, for standing up against such abuse and not accepting this bullying.

With a regime as rigid and violent as this, it is unsurprising that prisoners decided to take matters into their own hands with the introduction of yet further restrictions on their conduct. On Wednesday 15 November, over 250 prisoners showed solidarity with each other over their treatment by going on strike, refusing new work schedules which would penalise prisoners even more by refusal of privileges if, it was decided, their behaviour was deemed unsatisfactory. The abuses that this system offers these social inadequates, or prison officers as they're more commonly known, is obvious.



The response from the authorities was to send in 200 prison officers and cops fully 'tooled up' to restore order - a sign of the seriousness of how the situation was viewed. As more and more attacks are made on societies scapegoats by the Tories, of which prisoners are one element, it is becoming clear that people will be pushed only so far, before they react to defend themselves and organise resistance. With the incentive scheme being used nationwide throughout the prison establishment, there may yet be more strikes and confrontation to come. Until we can organise genuine movements for resistance against such attacks, the government (and all governments) will continue to deprive prisoners of the already limited privileges afforded them. Continuation of these attacks may yet prove their own undoing. LET'S HOPE SO!!!

"National" Disgrace

Fashion following fascists who are looking for the latest group to latch onto seem to be going for the National Alliance (sounds like a fucking bank!). Founded by the American Nazi William Pierce, NA concerns itself with the promotion of anti-Semitism and white superiority (how original!).

In the UK,NA is led by John Cato of Lincolnshire and Paul Jeffries of Leeds. Cato is a big fan of Pierce and often rips off his 'style' when writing his own comic The Oak and the C-18 colouring in book Putsch.

so far in the North East, NA have proved to be a threat only to unsuspecting bus shelters and lamp posts that have been regularly stickered.

A few days before the International Air show at Sunderland, a hand drawn sign left by NA declared they would be recruiting over that weekend. Whether this was a wind up is not clear at this point but anti-fascists who were in the area over the weekend didn't see anything!

Any information on who these sticker crazy dickheads are would be appreciated.

The following article was sent into the PO Box by an anonymous person to whom we are grateful. Most people reading this will have seen the National Alliance little green and yellow stickers on various bus stops etc. and it is obvious that the National Alliance have chosen the North East in the hope of recruiting people to their 'movement'. Like all Fascists, the National Alliance are a threat to our communities, workplaces, families and most of all, our class; and for this reason they need to be stopped.

The National Alliance need to be eradicated before they set rot into our communities, and by force if necessary. We would urge anybody reading this who has any information on members of NA, be it names and addresses, sightings, descriptions of people distributing their shit, to send details to the PO Box. All information will be treated in strictest confidence.

ANARCHY!

A Libertarian Broadsheet for the North East

Issue 5 ***Free!***

Anarchism **- The philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by human-made law; the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary.**

Anarchy **- The absence of government; disbelief in, and disregard of invasion and authority based on coercion and force; a condition of society regulated by voluntary agreement instead of government.**

Anarchist **- A believer in anarchism; one opposed to all forms of coercive government and invasive authority; an advocate of the absence of government as the ideal of political liberty and social harmony.**

STUFF THE VOTE!

VOTE FOR A HUNG PARLIAMENT!

The West might be one big cultural melting pot with regional and national differences being negligible - so what? Not a lot. Unfortunately one of the down sides is : whatever works in the U.S. will probably work in the U.K. - but who'd have thought we'd see the laughable "Rock the Vote" bandwagon over here ? It might have made you cringe to see the likes of R.E.M. and Tom Cruise urging the disenchanted youth of America to get off their butts and vote, but not half as much as it will seeing Damon Alban of Blur talking the same shite.

Okay, so R.E.M. , The Red Hot Chilli Peppers et al might be squeaky clean liberals, they might also do their public image the world of good just being on the telly, they might also make a bob or two out of it all- but could they really convince you that you make a difference by putting a cross in a box very 5 years? Maybe Damon Alban can do it better.....

The voting issue has always been something that has confused people about anarchists. It's not simply that we're against voting - far from it, we're simply against Parliament and it's joke of democracy. Intellectuals can argue 'till they're blue in the face about who really pulls the strings in the U.K., and whether it's multinationals , quangos, elected politicians or Vera Duckworth- it makes no odds , as the real issue is : ***we're*** not pulling any strings.

With the Tony Party looking more like the Tory Party each day, even the illusion of choice is waning. Scargill's "socialist" party can't be expected to be much better.

It would be nice to think that "Rock the Vote" will fall flat as a fart, except that unless fought off and ridiculed for what it is, - an attempt to give new life to a dying illusion - people might think that voting is cool. "Rock the Vote " aims to reach 18-25 year olds under the misconception that any one of the age bracket will follow the lead of pop stars.If no one voted, the country wouldn't fall into chaos, it'd keep on running like it always has, except that there'd be no one dreaming that they live in a democracy.

Okay, maybe not as simple as that, that's why as anarchists we organise industrially and community wide with the aim of taking back control of our own lives. Democracy isn't dead - we just haven't tried it yet.- *R*

STRIKES AS SOLFED MEMBER SACKED

A second one-day strike calling for the reinstatement of the Piccadilly 4 took place as we go to press. The Piccadilly 4 -including Tony Crowther, an anarcho-syndicalist and member of the Solidarity Federation- were all shop stewards at Manchester Piccadilly Station , and were sacked after seeking backing from workmates for strike action. Although found unfairly dismissed, they still remain out of a job. *cont. p2*

ALLEYCAT MOVES

Alleycat, the largest outlet for *leftwing and anarchist publications*, has moved from its cramped premises in Durham to **46, Low Friar Street, Newcastle.** The new shop looks good though still stocks stuff which seem out of keeping with the word *radical.* Cookery books besides, check it out!

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NICE ONE !

" VICTORY FOR STAFFING SOLUTIONS WORKERS AT W.H. KNIGHTS"

The Solidarity Centre, part of the Norwich Solfed, recently won a victory for workers at W.H.Knights, in Kings Lynn, Norfolk, by forcing an employment agency known as Staffing Solutions, to stop their illegal system of charging workers for ear protectors.

Solidarity Centre members representing Staffing Solutions employees, first leafleted the factory informing workers of their rights. The Solidarity centre then met with management of Staffing Solutions and Knights, where they agreed , at the request of the Solidarity Centre, to drop this practise. This ,and other improvements to our working conditions can only be achieved if you unite with your local Solidarity Centre.

The first step, as with Knights is for you and your workmates to contact your local centre. It may seem that nothing can be done to improve pay and conditions at work, but with simple determination and action, the Norwich Solidarity Centre have proven what can be achieved, The centres offer full protection and, of course, anonymity too members. Delegates (as at Knights) always act on the basis of being answerable to the workers concerned.

Taken from a news sheet produced by the Norwich Solidarity Centre, part of the Solidarity Federation, affiliated to the International Workers Association (I.W.A.)

STRIKES OVER RAIL SACKINGS *continued*

The R.M.T are now talking about spreading the strike, with Jimmy Knapp giving the thumbs up to the strikers - a rarity in todays' union leaders; especially since the sackings took place nearly four years ago!

The Solidarity Federation has an industrial transport section, the T.W.N., which produces it's own free news bulletin-. The Transport Worker. Seeking to unite workers in all areas of transport, from floor cleaner to engineer, to create a new, powerful fighting union. If you're involved in the transport industry in anyway, why not give them a shout?

Transport Workers Network
P.O. Box 73
Norwich
NR 1 2EB.

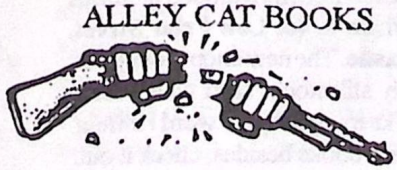
WHAT GOES DOWN?

The Anarchist movement being so small, and therefore unknown to the general public at large, suffers from having such a mysterious and slurred name. It seems that the word "anarchist" acts as a magnet for every fruitcake and looney in the U.K.

These people , in turn, produce publications and seem to be most peoples idea of what anarchists are. This, in turn, sours a lot of level-headed anarchists , and so the dominos fall. If anarchist ideas are new to you, check out other papers and develop those thoughts, maybe we're the nutters and ideally we should be living in wigwams.

Here's a rundown on some of the papers on the go; most are available from

ALLEY CAT BOOKS



CLASS WAR

By far, the U.K's most popular selling anarchist paper. Some might say a product of the '80's with it's fierce hang-'em high talk, still, C.W. manages to produce readable and entertaining articles.

The paper has improved over the yaers from a punk rock beginning; through to a very ambiguos period that produced a lot of rubbish; to todays C.W. that focuses a great deal on prisoners rights and what ever it sees fit as class struggle.

Not enough is mentioned on workplace fightback , though they seem to have dropped their almost anti-syndicalist approach of latter years.

The C.W.F. remains largely a propaganda organisation with no real constructive direction, but despite their small numbers and on-going fire fighting , they enjoy a notoriety not found anywhere else in the Left. If hype is all the C.W.F. survive off, so be it; would be a shame to see the paper disappear and be replaced by nothing.

50p every 2 months.

ORGANISE !

Organise ! is the paper of the A.C.F. (not to be confused with the *Organise! group in Northern Ireland*) and appears quarterly.

Organise ! is in short a sour old toss-rag that dismantles, dissects, scrutinizes, and criticizes just about everything past, present and future. With just a little more than a touch of the academic, Organise! reads like a collection of dissertations , some may be interesting; but ultimately it's just waffle.

As an organisation, the A.C.F. can be summed up in one word, WAFFLE!

60p quarterly

BLACK FLAG

Undeniably the best anarchist magazine about; Black flag has sadly appeared less frequently of late. In it's 26th year, B.F. has gone from a newspaper coming out as frequently as fortnightly, to a glossy magazine format without losing any of its edge.

WHAT GOES DOWN?

BLACK FLAG cont....

Although B.F. is an independent publication; it has remained the only national paper with a continual appearance that gives a decent, run down on workplace as well as community struggles, and, I.W.A. news.
£1.00 quarterly

COUNTER INFORMATION

Based in Scotland, C.I. is a regular broadsheet circulated just about everywhere, with the latest international fight-backs and news - sadly it is all too brief! Definitely the U.K.'s best plain broad sheet
quarterly,free or donation.

FREEDOM

Founded in 1886, freedom has changed dramatically since its early days of involvement in class struggle. Freedom can provide some interesting news, articles, comment, waffle and rubbish, not necessarily in that order. Freedom is part of Freedom Press, who produce regular new books, although usually of the waffle variety.
fortnightly 50p.

TAKING LIBERTIES

The A.B.C . is a network of groups supporting a variety of class struggle prisoners, and Taking Liberties is a smart feather in their caps. It features up to date and varied news from around the world, both inside and out the prison systems.
quarterly 40p

Once the voice of the Northern area Anarchist Black Cross groups, Taking Liberties has now been taken on as the national A.B.C. paper.

continued

SCOTTISH ANARCHIST

"Magazine of the Scotish Federation of Anarchists"

There have been only three issues of this magazine as we go to press, but so far so good. There's's been some interesting pieces, not a whole lot of news, but a good insight into what they're up to in Scotland.

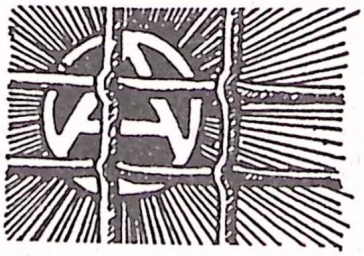
T.A.G. has featured in the letters pages, as they defend their own against someone who knows big words!- read all about it !
haphazardly £1.00

GREEN ANARCHIST

Primitivist paper, poor quality toilet paper.
quarterly 75p - *R*

TWO WRONGS DON'T MAKE A RIGHT

Last year's expulsion of Harry Wu for "spying " on China's prison labour camps leads to one big question - why travel all the way to China to report on human rights abuses when they're commonplace in the States?



Human rights are violated in China, but at a time when the U.S. is whipped into a frenzy of "get tough on crime" bugger the fact that the U.S. has been using prisoners as scapegoats for politicians incapacity to deal with poverty. The message is that if they can't make people stop committing crime, then they'll get comfort from watching them suffer.

The imprisonment rate in the U.S . is the highest in the world - the 1990 figure is 426 per 100,000. Compare this to Russia with 268, South Africa (under apartheid) 333 and Holland at 40; then we get a feel of it.

The imprisonment figure for Black people is 7 times higher than for Whites and the U.S. imprisons black men at a rate 4 times higher than South Africa did under apartheid! The prison population has also been promised to double in the 90's.

As for labour camps! Every U.S. Penitentiary runs at a profit created by working the inmates, punishment for non-compliance is harsh

Use of laser stun -guns; 38 mm gas guns; "nut guns" and batons are commonplace, as well as savage beatings leg irons and "lockdowns" .Whole prisons can be locked down for years at a time leaving prisoners isolated for 22+ hours A DAY, in minute cells. Confiscation of prisoners property is discretionary. In some of the new style penitentiaries, prisoners can be shipped around using surveillance cameras , loud speakers and electronic doors, so as to avoid even the contact of screws.

Penitentiaries are built in rural, isolated places with high unemployment, using local labour, so gaining local support.

In some states, more visible and seemingly boastful abuses are the reintroduction of chain -gangs and rock-breaking. All this without mentioning boot-camps, medical testing, or the appalling deaths penalty rate. Harry Wu could certainly have saved himself a fortune in plane tickets. -*R*

Edinburgh 10

Anti-fascist Solidarity

The trial of the Edinburgh 10, Anti-fascist Action members who were arrested after defending themselves from an attack by plain-clothes cops (see *Anarchy!* #4) ended unexpectedly early.

Fortunately, our upholders of law and order weren't too confident that their bullshit charges would stick and charges against 4 of the 5 defendants from Tyneside were dropped.

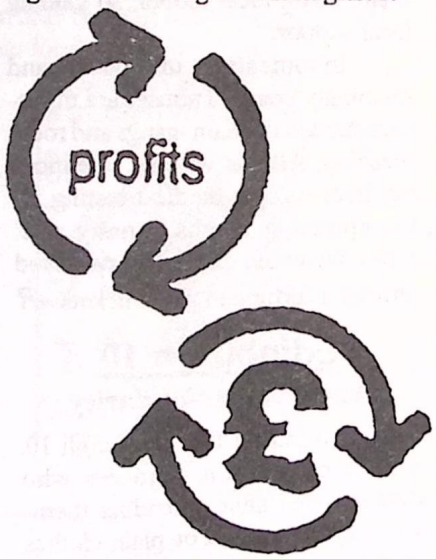
Support came from all parts of UK with money being raised at gigs and even a football signed by the Celtic team was raffled. A big *Nice One* to all who stuck together!

ABOLISH STATE BORDERS

◆States and their borders obstruct, divide and control people, destroying the freedom of individuals and communities to live and travel where and when they wish. What seem to be harmless lines on international maps are in fact real physical barriers established and maintained by government force.

◆People are checked, obstructed, questioned and humiliated at borders. People without the `correct` documents are turned back. People have to spend time giving personal details to government departments to get the documents - and pay for them as well.

◆Around border areas, communities are separated as meetings and associations are prevented. Offensive ideas such as nationalism and loyalty to the state are fostered. Propaganda is used against immigrants.



◆Governments suppress diversity and force conformity within their State borders, certain sections of a population can be prevented from travelling, eg. dissidents, others can be classed as `Stateless` and forced to live in unsettle conditions with the fear of deportation.

◆National borders are established by and for the benefit of the ruling classes. They themselves don`t allow the borders to affect activities and freedom. Multinationals, finacial corporations, the wealthy ignore or circumvent borders. The results of their activities: pollution, exploitation, hunger, etc., are international and affect us all.

◆We ordinary people, should not put up with the stupid, restrictive borders and oppressive nationalism/ State-ism.

◆Don`t be fooled by the reorganisation of borders to form super State communities; bigger States or world government will lead to greater international conformity and control. Our internationalism is solidarity with a respect for freely developed human communities, languages, etc. and for the abolishment of national States/ governments. *-J*

DEATH CULTS

Religious fanaticism in one form or another is a scourge of this end of the millennium. Muslim fundamentalism gave us the Fatwa against Salman Rushdie, for the crime of writing with a free conscience. In Algeria, Egypt, etc. the fundamentalists are busy murdering journalists, forcing women back to the veil etc.

But at least one part of the attraction of Islamic Fundamentalism in theses countries, especially for the youth with no prospects, is that it's seen as an alternative to the failed policies of local elites hitched to the Western model of capitalism.

Similarly, episodes like the Waco, siege and the Aum Shinrikyo sect in Japan can only be explained by the existential vacuum of the dying Twentieth century.

People need certainties, something to believe in other than school-work-pension. And since few people see revolutionary politics as a viable alternative (for the present at least), they suspend their critical faculties and follow all manner of messianic demagogues.

But this reactionary and escapist nonsense isn't restricted to the Islamic world or the various messianic sects in the industrialised countries. Another (mainstream) sect exists which had catastrophic influence around the world, pushing an agenda of subservience (especially of women) and nothing less than medievalism. It's the Roman Catholic Church.

Pope John Paul's latest encyclical condemns abortion, contraceptives, "in vitro" embryo fertilisation and voluntary euthanasia, whist warning of as "culture of death". But at least the holy mother Church is consistent- it's always told believers how and when to enjoy sex, how to raise a family, even how to die (in excruciating pain if necessary apparently). You can even court death by A.I.D.S. for want of a condom.

Last year this bunch of parasitic crows even had the face to admit that they had been wrong after all to torture and excommunicate Galileo 300 years ago for saying that the Earth revolves around the Sun , at a time when the Vatican thought that the world revolved around it!

Anarchists oppose all organised religion because it is a school for enslavement (of humanity to God). From this original sin follows class society, deference to the State etc. And no matter where you look these "men of God" (the Pope, Reverend Ian Paisley, mad Mullahs, 101 varieties of religious sect etc.), seem always to leave behind them a trail of intolerance and mumbo-jumbo.

Neither God nor master! -D

TAG News

Tyneside Anarchist Group have been pretty damn busy the past few months, enjoying increased interest in their activities. As well as weekly bookstalls at the monument in Newcastle, TAG have hosted a national Anarchist Black Cross meeting, held their first public meeting and have supported from beginning till end the Edinburgh 10.

They`ve also reorganised themselves, sharing the workload out more evenly and have ambitious plans for the near future - why not give them a shout? The TAG Hotline is 0191 420 9665, or better still, write to them at the same address as ***Anarchy!***

Anarchy!
PO Box 1TA
Newcastle
NE99 1TA

AT LAST!

There are many ways in which anarchists have tried to organise, but none so effective as through syndicalism. Anarcho-Syndicalism is a form of revolutionary unionism seeking to overthrow capitalism and the state, using the strike as its main weapon, and set up a society controlled by all workers. Unlike trade unionists, anarcho-syndicalists organise industry-wide, rather than by trade and craft. Instead of having one union for plumbers, another for welders and so on, in an industry such as ship-building, anarcho-syndicalists would have one big ship-building union. From cleaner to designer, if you're in the same industry, then you;d share the same union with equal status. Anarcho-syndicalism is about fighting for every day needs, such as better pay and conditions (as well as living conditions) and building stronger ties with other workers in other industries. We're working towards a day when workers can take over the running of their workplaces for themselves without bosses creaming it in.

It is a common misconception among some anarchists than anarcho-syndicalists are only interested in workplace issues, we organise in the community as well as industry and believe that community and industry shouldn't be seperated. Community struggles can be taken into the workplace and vice-versa. It's fighting the here and now struggles that people learn and experience organisisng for themselves. And as solidarity and confidecne grows, so does the effectiveness of the organisation. It isn.t enough to just call yourself an anarchist, we believe in the overthrow of capitalism and should be serious enough to be building organisations that can one day achieve this, or at the very least, improve our lifestyles. If you're an anarchist, you probably know what's wrong with the way the country's run and also know how you'd like to live your life. If the bit in between is a bit hazy, maybe syndicalism can offer a means to an end.

Support the Welling 8

Most people will remember the anti-fascist/anti-racist march in Welling, south east London in October 93 against the British National Party (BNP) headquarters which ended up in a riot between marchers and the police. Top copper (and erect penis) Paul Condon went on telly two days before the march saying that he had received reports that there was going to be trouble. This is code with the police - "We're going to crack heads and blame it on outside agitators". Thousands of people marched into a carefully laid police trap; marchers were boxed into narrow streets by hundreds of riot police who, as per usual, had only one thing on their minds - a ruck!

Violent confrontations started with marchers fighting back against police attack, and rightly so - a lot of people were either nicked on the spot or picked up at a later date, with the willing help of the Tabloids, who splashed people's faces across their front pages, even offering rewards to readers for grassing people up! Predictably the police made a huge effort to track down the "rioters" while ignoring, or half-heartedly fucking up investigations into racist murders like that of Stephen Lawrence, (the inadequacies of their investigation were shown as Stephen's family found substantial new evidence, and have had to go to the point of taking out a private prosecution to achieve justice for their son). No big shock there, given the priorities of the police and their political bosses.

Now, two years on (Sept 95), 14 people were found guilty of riot, 9 of them receiving jail sentences - THESE PEOPLE NEED OUR SUPPORT!

It is always important to support those that are imprisoned for their part in the class struggle, and the case of the Welling Eight is no different. Cards and letters of support are a total breath of fresh air to prisoners and can make the difference between a good and bad day - after all, prison life is a lonely one and keeping the prisoner in contact with the outside world can make them better able to cope with "doing their time" in prison.

PLEASE SUPPORT THESE PEOPLE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN.

Karl Anacoura, RNO599 (3 years)
Sanjiv Karla, RNO598 (2 years)
Paul Gay, RNO593 (2 years, 8 months)
Mark Gay, RNO594 (3 years)
Russell Wild, RNO597 (3 years)
The above are being held at HMP Elmley, Church Rd, Eastchurch, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 4AY.

Stephen Kelly, RNO318 (16 months)
Charlie Ryder, RNO595 (16 months)
Write to these two at HMP Aldington, Ashford, Kent, TN25 7BQ

John McFeely, RNO596 (2 years)
John can be contacted at HMP Lindholme, Bawtry Rd, Hatfield Woodhouse, Doncaster, DN7 6EE

If you have not written to a prisoner before and think it may be a bit daunting, then please don't hesitate to contact us and we'll send you our leaflets which give advice on writing to prisoners and practical support for prisoners:
NEWCASTLE ABC, PO BOX ITA, NEWCASTLE NE99 1TA.
Or contact Stephen Lawrence Family Campaign, PO Box 3433, London SE18 3SS.

Edinburgh Trials Update

On Saturday 3rd June, a group of TAG members joined Edinburgh AFA and Glasgow Red Action to steward the Republican James Connelly march. On the way to the march they were attacked by a group coming out of a pub known to be used by the far-right. After defending themselves the anti-fascists tried to leave the area, but 10 were caught by the police. The attackers were actually plain clothes cops, and the anti-fascists were charged with Breach of the Peace, Resisiting Arrest, Police Assault and rescuing someone from arrest.

After spending 50 hours in custody they were bailed. At the trial in November the 3 anti-fascists who were charged only with Breach had the charges dropped. Two others had assault charges dropped in return for pleading guilty for resisting arrest. The two remaining anti-fascsists (3 others did not appear) faced the most serious of the charges. After one police witness it became clear that the police had used the months well to concoct their 'story'. After advice from their solicitor the two activists pleaded guilty to assault and one to rescuing the other from arrest. The police dropped the breach and resisting arrest charges.

The 4 who pleaded guilty return to Edinburgh for sentencing on December 6. All four face large fines and at least one could still be jailed. Donations to the bust fund are needed more than ever and can be sent to the P.O. Box.

The Zapatistas - are they Anarchists?

The reaction of anarchists to the emergence of the Zapatistas (EZLN) has been a very confused and confusing affair. Some embraced them from the outset as the embodiment of armed anarchist struggle. Others, such as the Mexican anarcho-syndicalist 'Casa del Obrero Mundial' actually supported war against the EZLN! British anarchists have generally regarded the EZLN with some suspicion and have only tentaticely welcomed its arrival. Along with this equivocal welcome several ill-founded criticisms have been made. These criticisms take 3 basic forms.

Firstly, that the EZLN is an army and is therefore, by its nature, authoritarian. This was rather feebly argued on the internet and barely requires an answer. Any army, to be effective, needs some kind of command structure. Militias in Spain at the time of the revolution ,1936-38 (and this included anarchist militias) proved that a command structure does not necessarily equate to oppression. Orwell, in *Homage to Catalonia* describes this effectively. It was understood that orders had to be obeyed, but it was also understood that when you gave an order it was as comrade to comrade and not as superior to inferior.

The second criticism links with the first in that it is claimed that the EZLN commitee is an elite group with the power of information over the peasant army. This too, is based on ignorance of fundamental organising principles of the Zapatistas. The EZLN emerged from the fusion of two almost diametrically opposed traditions; the Marxist-Leninist, hiarchically structured form of a Guevarist politico-military organisation and the traditional forms of indiginous participatory collective decision making. This democratic form came to dominate decision making in the EZLN. As Marcos describes : "It is something understood by both parties : they understood that we wouldn't do anything without consulting them and we understood that if we did do something without consulting them we would lose them...ultimately the theoretical confronted the practical and something happened - the result was the EZLN". Marcos is completely candid in his advocacy of power being exercised by all : "...important decisions have to be made democratically from below, not from above...in the EZLN a decision cannot be made untill every *companero* is consulted".

Finally, some anarchists cite the EZLN as being prisoners of "the illusion of democracy" citing phrases like "the liberated population freely and democratically elected their own administrative authorities" (from the Declaration of the the Forest of Lacandona) as evidence of this. This criticism represents that of an essentially western version of what 'democracy' entails i.e. oppression, farce, capitalism *ad nausem*. This blinkered view fails to appreciate that *true* democracy is none of these things and that when the Zapatistas speak of democracy, they mean local organisation, mutual cooperation and a system based on that which the indiginous peoples have developed. In other words, a form of direct democracy in which all have a say in the decision making process. In other words : anarchism.

Anarchist criticisms of the EZLN are based on ignorance both of the organisation itself and of what it signifies for the development of armed revolutionary struggle. Marcos is quite correct when he claims : "This (the emergence of the EZLN) will radically change the concept of revolution, of who the revolutionary class is, of what a revolutionary organisation is." The Zapatistas, with their fundamentally undogmatic, non-sectarian, open and pragmatic approach have demonstrated themselves to be more anarchists than many Anarchists. We can only hope that these "anarchists" rethink their often narrow, sectional dogmas and learn the lessons that the Zapatistas have to teach them.

Letter from...

Dear Comrades

Just a comment on your piece on the Clegg release, you say of the first soldier "jailed" for murder in Ireland "Private Ian Thayne, having shot a man in the back served just two years then re-joined his regiment." Let me tell you something. Thayne came from the village I am living in, two weeks after he was jailed for murder, I was in the local pub The Abbey, when three young guys came in. My mate, an ex-soldier, asked if I knew who the one in the middle was, I didn't. It was Thayne. He was allowed to go home every weekend, went to discos, pubs, the lot and returned home to "house arrest" at a barracks for the rest of the time, all of the while his expenses home and pocket money were paid from a special army welfare fund, while his wages from the whole two years went into his bank account. Fact! This is the justice we expect from the British state, what is amazing is that this most open of secrets round this neck of the woods was never exposed, until we pestered M.P.s and Irish organisations over it, who frankly just wouldn't believe what we were telling them.

David Douglass

We welcome articles and letters - or for more information about anarchism and ABC prisoners contact the P.O. Box.

OTHER CONTACTS:

Solidarity Federation : PO BOX 384, Preston, Lancs, PR1 6PQ.

London ABC : c/o 121 Bookshop, Railton Rd, London SE24.

Anarchist Communist Federation c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

Class War : PO Box 467, London, E8 3QX.

TYNESIDE ANARCHIST GROUP

PO Box ITA, Newcastle, NE99 1TA. Tel : 0191 - 4209665

E-Mail : TAG@hiddenag.demon.co.uk